

New Members

The following people have recently become Full Members:

Andrew Santer, Richard Lamb, John Amos, Marian Higgins, Teresa Oakley and John Skipper.

While George Jasieniecki has joined as an Associate Member.

Subs

Remember subscriptions are due at the AGM on October 3th.

Trips

Trips to numerous and varied locations have been made over the past few months including:

Arthog (Shropshire's outdoor Education Centre to help make safe a slate mine), Knoydart (a Scottish mica mine - brief report on p3), Nenthead, Wanlockhead, Watsons Shaft at Tankerville, Snailbeach, Gorn, Dinorwic, Clive Copper Mine, Cwmorthin, Huglith and Dorothea engine house.

The club, along with the Shropshire Mines Trust had an interesting display at the Onslow Park Steam Rally (24th-25th August), where the clubs had their own arena for displaying engines recovered from Hem Heath Colliery.

During the NAHMO weekend, the Club recieved a rescue call-out over a horse which had fallen down a shaft on Wood Level - just when you thought it was safe to leave the County!

Hammer Stone

Pete Owen has recently found a stone hammer in Llanymynech Ogof. It is thought to be very old, and is currently being dated.

There is a possibility that the site will be gated, this may have a knock-on effect with groups that use the Ogof venturing into more dangerous/unstable sites elsewhere in Shropshire.

Retirement Gift

Tony the landlord of the Last Inn was presented with a miners lamp at the July Club Meeting to mark his retirement and in recognition of his assistance to the Club over the years.

Ranger Nick

Nick Southwick has recently been appointed as a voluntary ranger at Snailbeach (he says he is only doing it for the money!)

Two wagons from the Snailbeach District Railway have been found at the Talylyn Railway, they have now been brought back to Snailbeach by the Council. One wagon is complete, while the other is in bits.

A display on the Club and area has also been placed in the Bog Interpretation centre.

Bat-Nap

Mike Worsfold has asked that members do not go beyond the bridge in Perkins Level between mid-October and mid-March as bats will be hibernating in the large stope.

First Aid

There are (at the time of printing) some additional places on the First Aid Course. Contact Alan Moseley if you wish to take advantage of one.

Dr Trevor Ford, OBE

Congratulations to Dr Trevor Ford, a former president of the British Cave Research Association (BCRA), who has been awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours, for services to geology and cave science.

Cave Diving Losses

Rob Palmer, a cave diver of considerable repute and technical ability died on the 5th May during a non-cave dive in the Red Sea. He had planned a dive to 90 meters, on a reef, when he was observed to pass through that depth without stopping and disappear. He had recently moved to Grand Bahama to establish a cave diving and research centre (the Blue Holes Foundation) and had written two books on his expeditions in the Bahamas - both epic tales. His technical ability and enthusiasm will be a great loss to caving and cave diving in particular.

In another diving incident on August 17th, Rob Parker, died while making a dive in a virgin blue hole in the Bahamas, during the filming of a TV documentary.

It appears that he had already got into difficulties earlier in the dive and needed emergency assistance from a colleague to stop himself from sinking.

News Round-Up 1

by Ivor Brown

Boiler Room

In May 1997 work was taking place on the boiler room remains to the Compressor House at Snailbeach Mine. The flue arrangements appear to survive virtually intact.

Work was also continuing on the repairs to Tankerville Mine and Chimney and scaffolding was being erected on Ladywell Engine House.

Church Anniversary

On 15th June, St. Luke's C. of E. Church, Snailbeach held its 125th Anniversary Celebrations which included a floral display and social history display in the Village Hall.

Included in this were some mining artefacts and Mrs William's "Spa-box", an excellent, possibly unique, display of local minerals. Lords Hill Chapel has recently ceased to be used and is being taken over by the District Council (*IJB has provided the Council with information on this for a TV programme*).

Fry's Journals

Tom Fry's journals, containing details of his work on Shropshire metal mines in the 1950's, complete with illustrations are now in Bristol City Museum. An article on them is given in the newspaper "Down to Earth", June 1997. (Tom has recently died aged 95, his knowledge on the geology of the Shropshire Mining area was outstanding).

German Ironstone

On a recent visit to Germany IJB went underground at the Tiefer Stollen Ironstone Mine at Wasseralfingen in Baden-Wurtemberg Province. This like a couple of other mines in South Germany has been converted into a tourist mine recently. It was poor quality stone, worked from the 1500's to the 1960's.

This mine is entered on a battery-powered train, disembarking underground for a film show and then a tour of the workings and an

underground museum. Time about 1½ hours, but nothing outstanding - for an extra £40 visitors could stay another 8 hours and overcome "asthmatic problems".

Point of Ayr

Only the headframe and two buildings remained in June at the ex-Budge Colliery at Point of Ayr. There is however a small mining display and a full scale mock-up of parts of an oil and gas rig as used off-shore in the BHP Visitor Centre which overlooks the site (well worth a visit).

The Grange Limestone Mine (Tourist Mine and Army Museum) at nearby Holywell is now closed to visitors.

Share Certificates

Old mining share certificates for the following companies have recently been put on sale by Bernard Moore: Abdon Clee and Clee Hills (IJB bought the last Roman Gravels Certificate to come on the market).

Coal Statistics

The latest statistics available for coal, year ending 31st March 1996 show that Shropshire's 3 opencast coal sites (total 149 ha) produced 238,000 tonnes coal in the previous 12 months and 57,000 tonnes where still available in areas with planning permission.

Geology Show

The August Shropshire Geological "Extravaganza" was held in Upper Forge, Coalbrookdale. One party visited many of the mine entrances locally for limestone, Walkers Earth, coal, clay and ironstone. Much has been lost recently by development, uncontrolled vegetation and access obstructed by fencing and footpath disputes.

Caphouse Colliery

The National Museum for Coal, at Caphouse Colliery closed its underground section during August due to the threat of flooding from neighbouring closed mines.

Mines Rescue Service

Latest reports show that there were 67 underground coal mines in Great Britain registered with the 6 Rescue Stations now in operation. There were 90 'full time' rescue men at the Stations and 432 part-time at the pits.

RJB Report

In their Report for last year RJB shows that they are now down to 18 pits.

Bilsthorpe and Point of Ayr have closed, Riccall and Whitemoor have combined, as have Wistow and Gascoigne Wood.

Asfordby New Mine is due to close due to geological problems. RJB have also stated that they would open a new two-shaft mine near Lincoln if the Government would guarantee a market for the coal.

Browns Abroad

Watching his recently married daughter depart to join her husband for their new life in the USA brought home to IJB the feelings that the family must have had when, about 100 years ago during the rapid decline of Shropshire's metaliferous mining industry (iron and lead), an earlier generation followed the same route.

Things were different then of course, no telephones, no 11-hour flight, but many days often weeks by sea and land, plus very poor prospects of ever seeing the family together again.

So many of Shropshire's mining families must have experienced the pain of parting - for them it was often for life, for us hopefully, there will be holidays together before long.

Cave Science

A one day Cave Science Symposium is being organised for Saturday 7th March 1998 at Keele University.

For further information contact: John Wilcock, 22 Kingsley Close, Stafford, ST17 9BT
Tel: 01785-258979



Knoydart Mica Mine

11th June 1997

Alan Taylor and Colin Spedding made a 4 day visit to Knoydart on the west coast of Scotland to see the remains of the mica mine, about 5 miles south east of Inverie [on Loch Nevis, NGR: NG 767 000 (map 33)].

This mine is unique as the most remote mine in the country - about 17 miles to the nearest highway. The route is to Mallaig, then take a supply boat to the

remote village of Inverie. The climb to the mine is about 2,300 feet up and 400 ft down to finish 1,870 ft. - there is no head start as Inverie is at beach level.

The mine is a small surface working where the mica vein can be seen insitu. The only artefact of any account is an air compressor dating from the early part of this century.

The compressor is a Vee Twin, about 5" bore and stroke, air cooled with an after-cooler, directly driven by a 4 cylinder water cooled petrol engine, about 3 litre capacity. This is now open to the weather and deteriorating, although mostly complete, the magneto has been removed.

Alan Taylor

Information Required

On the Nash family, Broseley

Mr. M.Pinhorn is preparing a book on John Nash, the famous architect. He has established that Nash was a member of the Nash family of Broseley, who were colliers and tenants of the Weld family. Nash's ancestor is said to have moved from Broseley to Neath to act as an agent for Sir Humphrey Mackworth.

Any information please to:

Mr.M.Pinhorn,
Normans Place,
Calbourne,
Newport, Isle of Wight,
PO30 4QR

Lordshill & Other Chapels, Snailbeach.

Information is required on the establishment of "Lords Hill Particular Baptist Church" and its connections with the adjacent Snailbeach Mine. It is known that John Palmer held a licence for Baptist meetings in a dwelling house at Snailbeach in 1812.

Kelly's Shropshire Directories give 1818 as the date of the first building, "at Lords Hill, Snailbeach, a Baptist Chapel built 1818, seating 250 persons" (1941 Edition). Other sources give 1833 or 1835.

For example the book "Memoirs of the Late Samuel Hughes, A Shropshire Miner" published 1878 (W.Benson editor) says that Samuel was 'converted' to the Church soon after his marriage age 22 in 1831 when one

day he; "saw some people building a chapel near the mine (where he had worked since aged 12) called Lords Hill Baptist Chapel, and amongst them the minister gathering stones. He was surprised and thought, 'There must be something more in religion than I have ever been aware of' "

All sources however seem to agree that this building was replaced by the present one in 1876.

The 1870's, when the mine was being modernised, was also the time for rejuvenation of the Churches. Not only was the new Baptist Church built then, but also the C. of E. Mission Church (1872, 85 seats) and of course the Methodists (Primitive Methodists 1876). There were certainly sufficient seats in Snailbeach's for all its residents!

Information on the churches please to:

Ivor Brown,
95 Manygates Lane,
Sandal,
Wakefield,
WF2 7DL

The reason for the siting of the Lords Hill Chapel, it is said, is that the Marquis of Bath would not allow a non-conformist place of worship on his land, but the Earl of Tankerville would, and this was the nearest suitable site. Later a strip of land on the other side (Marquis of Bath side) of the small stream was added to the burial ground, but never used for that purpose.

Prize offered for the first photo (or

drawing) received of the Memorial Stone to the only one of the seven casualties of the 1895 Mine Disaster who was buried at Lords Hill - send it to IJB at the address above.

Ivor Brown

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I would like to pass on some comments if possible to the Caving Club or whoever is responsible for the work being done on the surface buildings of Snailbeach Mine. We visited earlier this year and were really impressed with the site. The effort is well worthwhile. In addition, the journal I bought which covers the history of the surface remains was excellent.

Thanks very much

Mary Wilde
Derbyshire Armchair Caver

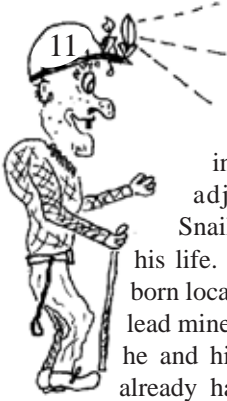
New Ambulance

Cumbria Ore Mines Rescue Unit (COMRU) has recently taken delivery of a new custom built £23,000, ambulance, based on an LDV Convoy.

A van base was picked to cope with the large amount of equipment the team carries with it. It has several interesting mods, including limited-slip rear differential and an interior finish that allows the vehicle to be power washed inside and out!



Alfred Hewitt of Snailbeach, Lead mine-worker 1978-1974



Alfred was born on December 8th 1878 and lived in the same house, adjacent to the Snailbeach Mine, all his life. His father, John, born locally in 1835 was a lead miner at the mine and he and his wife Margaret already had five children, the oldest being aged fourteen. Three years later in 1881 the census shows the family to be John aged 46 (lead miner), Margaret 36 (wife), Albert 16 (puddler at smelt works), John 14, Mary 11, Margaret 9, Alice 5 and Alfred 2 years.

In 1883 when Alfred was aged 4, his father was involved in a serious accident at Snailbeach Mine which caused him to lose one eye and damage the other, his right arm was broken and a knee cap was splintered. This was "due to some unseen remnants of dynamite, from a previous shot hole being exploded when further holes were being drilled on rocks alongside".

A machine drill was in use and one of Mr. Hewitt's workmates, Odgers, was killed outright, another, Preece was badly cut about the face and head, and a third Howson, had one finger broken and body bruised. The accident had happened on May 15th in the 282 yard level and the inquest on Odgers was held in the Miners Arms, Minsterley.

In a letter from Henry Dennis (manager) to E. Williams, (Company Secretary) dated 24th May, Dennis said that both the Inspectors of Mines and of Explosives had agreed that it was a "pure accident". They found no fault "with anyone or anything, nor did that suggest anything". He concluded "The three men are doing well".

From this time young Alfred resolved never to work down the mine although he would be prepared to work on the surface. The 1891 census shows that at that date the father was "blind" and young Alfred was aged 12 and

described as a "scholar". More children had arrived and when the family was complete there were 10 in all plus the parents. The Snailbeach Company minute book contains correspondence which shows that, as was customary following a major accident a miner was allowed a cottage rent free as compensation. However, after Mr. Hewitt's death in 1903 an annual rent of £3 was being charged.

In order to raise income for the family, Alfred's mother obtained permission to use part of the house next door, which contained a doctor's surgery, to install a stove and oven to bake light cakes (evidence of the oven still exists). Before the father had died the cakes were taken around the district by him, always accompanied by one of the children, often Alfred, using a donkey and cart. The cakes were sold at 9 for 3d.

Alfred's mother also earned money by helping out as a midwife for neighbours and all the family went "whinberry picking" in the summer. A photograph survives taken in the 1890's showing the father with bandaged eyes and his family including a teenage Alfred.

At this time the house was only two-up, two-down and pretty cramped, there was no electricity, gas or water. In more recent years the house was enlarged probably extending over the former railway line and services added (see Figure 1).

By 1895, Alfred was aged 16, he had already worked for some time on the surface plant, and then was working in the mine manager's house as a servant. This was the time of the Snailbeach Mine Disaster and Alfred used to relate the story:

"I was on my way to be at the house for 7am when I saw them stretching out a rope on the ground by the main shaft. I asked what was up and a man said the rope had broken and the cage had gone to the bottom. there had been 7 men in the cage and all were killed."

Shortly afterwards Alfred got work in the pumping engine house (on Lords Hill). He always said that there were two big engines there, presumably the Cornish Engine and a winding engine.

The Cornish pumping engine was known to Alfred as Lady Mary Deborah



The Hewitt Family, c1890's
(Photograph courtesy Ken Lock)

Blind Mr. Hewitt (middle left) with bandages over eyes. Alfred Hewitt is at the right-hand end of the back row.



Alfred Hewitt of Snailbeach, continued....

and he said its rods were finally stopped in January 1911. He also referred to another engine as “a capstan engine”.

He was earning good money, about £1 per week but the hours were long. At this time an ordinary miner’s wage was about 15/-, the mine blacksmith 18/- and piece workers (plunderers) earned more than £1 per week. On odd occasions Alfred did go underground and of this he said “I could not have worked there, you had to crouch and tallow candles were the only lighting”.

Alfred was also involved occasionally with the steam powered air compressor. He said that they were built by Siemens and Edwards and that after closure of the mine they were taken to Westminster Mine near Wrexham. Sometimes he also drove Old or Georges Pit winding engine, at the shaft where the 1895 accident had occurred.

A photograph survives showing Alfred, Fred Blakemore, Jack Corfield, Joe Rowson and Sam Williams with a new headgear about to be erected but it is not certain whether this is at Black Tom Shaft or Georges Shaft when the latter was reused for working barytes.

Some years later he moved to the County Council Quarry at Callow Hill, where he finished his working life. Alfred was a member of Lords Hill Baptist Church all his life and as a boy went to Sunday School there three times a day. He was also a founder member of Snailbeach Brass Band, which started with melodeons and tin whistles, moved on to flutes and piccolos and finally on to brass instruments. he played the cornet and remembered well leading processions of Sunday School scholars from the local churches and also leading the Ancient Order of Foresters in their march from the Railway Inn to

happenings associated with each building.

Alfred died on June 14th 1974 and with him went first-hand memories of the great days of the Snailbeach Mine. He was buried at Lords Hill Baptist Chapel and Ken Lock was one of the bearers, representing the old Shropshire Mining Club. Alfred had always been ready to talk to club members and he is still greatly missed. The cottage remains amidst the reclamation works and is now occupied by one of his grandchildren. Two of Alfred’s daughters are still living locally, Mrs Chidley and Mrs Williams.

Thanks

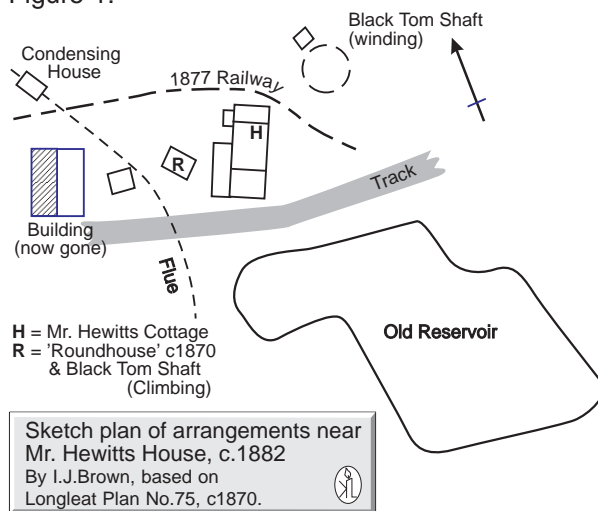
The writer would like to thank Mrs Williams and Mrs Chidley (and her sons) for their help over the years and wishes to acknowledge too the assistance received from Ken Lock and Andy Cuckson in reading the draft and in the provision of extra information.

References:

- Mines Inspector’s Reports.
- Census for 1881 and 1891.
- ‘Old Men remember the twenty-four hours a day bustle that was Snailbeach’ Anon, Shropshire Magazine, April 1963.
- ‘Life in the Old Lead Mines’, Anon, Bridgnorth Journal 12th August 1985.

Ivor J. Brown

Figure 1:



The writer had long discussions with Alfred on two occasions, 11th August 1968 and 28th March 1970.

In 1968 he was aged ninety and was keen to discuss the afternoon service at Lords Hill and the life of the church. Then 30-

Figure 2:



Stone building as shown on Black Tom Shaft to 40yd level (probably c1910). From 4743/17 Dennis Collection Shrops. R.O.

Just at the time Snailbeach Mine was closing, in 1911, Alfred married a local girl and they had 4 children. Alfred was lucky, however, because when Snailbeach Mine closed a shaft next to his home was being re-opened for barytes (Black Tom shaft) by Thomas Edwards and 12 other men. Alfred worked “on the horizontal engine” until the early 1920s. On its closure the engine was sold to Longden Common Colliery and Alfred moved to the Huglith Barytes Mine.

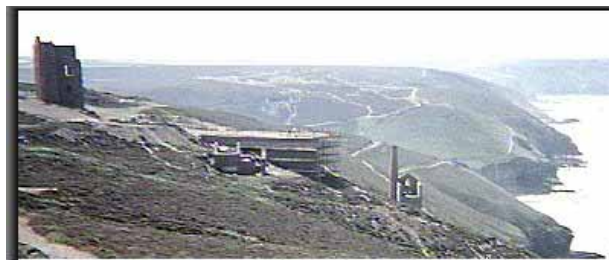
40 attended on Sunday afternoons in summer, but they also used the old Orehouse next to the Carpenters shop in winter. (In 1997 a much smaller number attended the chapel in the Orehouse, the old building having been recently closed).

At the 1970 meeting he was keen to discuss his memories of the Snailbeach Mine at work and the various buildings and engine houses round his cottage were described in some detail. He provided memories of the people and



Wheal Coates - New Shaft, July 1997

Many members will be familiar with Wheal Coates on the cliffs of St. Agnes Head (NGR: **SW 700 501**). The remains at the site span several periods with gridded shafts, a pumping engine house, derelict tin streaming plant buildings, cliff workings, a whim engine house, derelict stamps and other buildings, and engine foundations it is relatively difficult to understand them all!



Wheal Coates, Stamps Engine House on left, Towanroath Pumping House lower down, with 'New' shaft in the middle.

The stamps engine house on top of the cliffs was preserved in the late 1980's.



Preserved and gridded shaft at Wheal Coates, Stamps and Whim Engine houses in background

The whole area is now in the care of the National Trust, so it was surprising to find construction of a new shaft on the very edge of the cliff above the Towanroath engine house taking place during July of this year.



Above: Flat 'stone-paved' area around the 'new' shaft.

The 'new' construction consisted of a flat 'stone' area leading to the new shaft. However, all was not what it seemed, the 'stone' was actually plaster covered plywood and chicken wire, supported by scaffolding. The shaft was just a square plywood casing.

Below: 'New' shaft construction from cliff path, stamps engine house in background.

The construction was actually part of a film set being built for a film called "All the Little Animals".



I don't quite know what the film was about but the whole thing was being built so that a Rolls Royce could be thrown down a mine shaft!



Above: Towanroath Pumping Engine House, with later horizontal engine bed on the left.

Right: Pumping engine house from the cliff path, the gridded shaft is just in front of the building.

The 30-inch pumping engine house, on Towanroath Shaft is probably one of the most photographed engine houses in Britain. Dating from the 1880's, the building was preserved by the National Trust in 1973.



Towanroath Engine house at sunset.

Kelvin



Shropshire Mines Trust Update

Tankerville Mine

Most of the Tankerville Mine site has now been officially scheduled as a Historic Monument.

The Trust would like to reinstate the lower reservoir to hold water and encourage wildlife like frogs and newts back to the site. Does anyone have a very large liner?

We are always in need of certain materials on site. If you are able to donate any of the following they would be gratefully received:

- Fencing poles
- Fencing wire
- Timber of all sorts
- Wooden railway sleepers
- Young trees or natural shrubs
- Wild flower seeds
- Hardcore
- Seats/picnic tables.

On 14th June a number of Councillors from the Parish, District and County Councils were invited to the site by the Trustees. After a talk by Adrian Pearce about the Trust and our plans, Edwin Thorpe gave them a conducted tour of the site and its history. Stuart Tomlins then presented Richard Phillips, Chairman of South Shropshire District Council, with a painting by Malcolm Newton in recognition of the support that the Trust has received from the Council.

One piece of bad news is that the Science Museum has now said that we cannot have the 40 pumping engine in their store at Wroughton after all. They apparently now have plans to display it at their London premises.

This means that the option now being the subject of a feasibility study for Lottery funding is to merely rebuild, re-roof and re-floor it as a low key interpretation centre manned by volunteers at weekends.

English Heritage say that we could install a beam on its own but we cannot use a mock one. They would, however, let us erect a wooden headgear.

A small metal headgear has been built

by Stuart Tomlins and placed over the Watsons Shaft so it can be used with the SCMC winch for descents.

Engines, Engines Everywhere!

Stuart Tomlins is like a ferret when it comes to sniffing out surplus mining artefacts and he has a silver tongue when it comes to talking the owners to give or sell them to the Trust. We already have a load of blacksmiths tools donated from the closed Markham Main Colliery and two winding wheels bought from the closed Point of Ayr Colliery (the latter thanks also to English Heritage who gave us a grant to pay for them). A winding engine and a Pikrose winch from the closed Hem Heath Colliery have been given to the Trust on long term loan by the Coal Authority.

The winding engine is a two cylinder horizontal engine built in 1961 by the firm of John Tinsley of Darlington. It is known as a crab winder and, although built on steam lines, it was always worked on compressed air. It was originally installed on a new shaft at Wolstanton Colliery near Stoke-on-Trent, which at the time was the deepest coal shaft in Western Europe. It was used as an emergency winder for such things as when the rope needed to be replaced on the main Koepe tower winder.

When Wolstanton Colliery closed, it was moved to Hem Heath Colliery near Stafford where it was used as a winch on the drift shaft. The engine was dismantled and recovered by Trust members over a weekend in June, which was quite an achievement as it weighs 45 tons in total, with the winding drum alone weighing 30 tons!

Stuart has also found a spar mine in North Wales with all of its surface plant intact. The owner has agreed to donate a vertical compressor to the Trust and we are trying to negotiate a price for the rest of the plant. If a reasonable price, we can bring it back to Shropshire and we will have a unique set of 20th century mining plant.

Onslow Steam Rally

Members from the Trust and SCMC took part in the Onslow Steam Rally near Shrewsbury over 23-25th August 1997. We had our own display arena with:-

- Tinsley steam winder operated by compressed air
- Pikrose winch winding a coal truck on rails up a slope from a mock adit
- SCMC winch and headgear
- George's Shaft cage
- Snailbeach District Railway truck
- Winding wheel from Point of Ayr Colliery
- Sales and display tent.

We are grateful to the firm of T O Tomlins Ltd of Halfway House for supplying the lorries and cranes necessary to transport the items to site. There was great interest shown in the displays over the two days it was open to the public and many ex-colliers said that they thought they would never see such things again.

Ladywell Mine

The CAP scheme has paid for the engine house to be re-pointed and this has now been completed.

Heritage Open Days

This is a scheme that takes place all over the EEC during the weekend of 13-14th September. The idea is to open to the public places that wouldn't normally be accessible.

As part of this, SCMC and SMT are organising surface and underground tours at Snailbeach Mine over the weekend. At the time of writing, it is still a few days away so a report will appear in the next issue.

South Crofty Mine

If you haven't already heard, the last tin mine in the UK is about to close since the world price of tin has dropped to an uneconomical level.

The management is trying to get government assistance to carry on but the future is unknown.

Adrian Pearce



The Mines & Tunnels of the Ironbridge Gorge, Part 1

by Ivor Brown

The Ironbridge Gorge is a very old mining area, records date from the 13th and 14th centuries and occasional mine 'plans' survive from the 17th with some of the workings still accessible dating from the 18th Century. All underground workings in the Gorge however, should be treated with respect for there are many dangers present. It is unwise to enter any such workings, even those described in the following notes without proper precautions, skills and equipment.

The area would not have been able to make the claim as the 'cradle of the Industrial Revolution' without its fast flowing streams, navigable waterway, the experienced miners and ironworkers and the variety of natural resources present. These included ironstone, coal, limestone, fireclays, tileclays and brickclays, sandstone, natural bitumen or 'tar', salt, 'Walkers' earth and sand. Evidence of early working of all these resources remains and some of the important surface sites are accessible to the public today. Only one underground working is considered 'safe' however and that is the Tar Tunnel, which is now a show-mine.

For over 40 years the writer has been scouring the hillsides of the Gorge for indications of mining, and following up reports of 'holes' and 'shafts' and likely references to these on maps, plans and other documents. This series of notes is intended to indicate the wealth of material that has been obtained, but it should be remembered that much of it has been collected in a professional capacity using accepted procedures. The ad-hoc approach to mine exploration particularly in the Coal Measures of the Gorge is not to be recommended.

However throughout the period mentioned above properly organised trips have been arranged to view the mining remains and the following is the result of numerous requests to publish more detailed information.

For more details on the location, geology and usage of the various

minerals the writer's paper "Underground in the Ironbridge Gorge" in Industrial Archaeological Review Vol. III No. 2 Spring 1979 is to be recommended.

Note

On a visit to many of the sites in August 1997 it was found that access was much more limited than on previous visits. Surface access was affected by disputes over footpath

rights, much more fencing was evident and vegetation had taken off with a vengeance. Furthermore recent disturbances had on occasion covered up previously visible remains and accesses had been filled in or gated.

The writer would appreciate information obtained from other recent visits so this can be included in a later update.

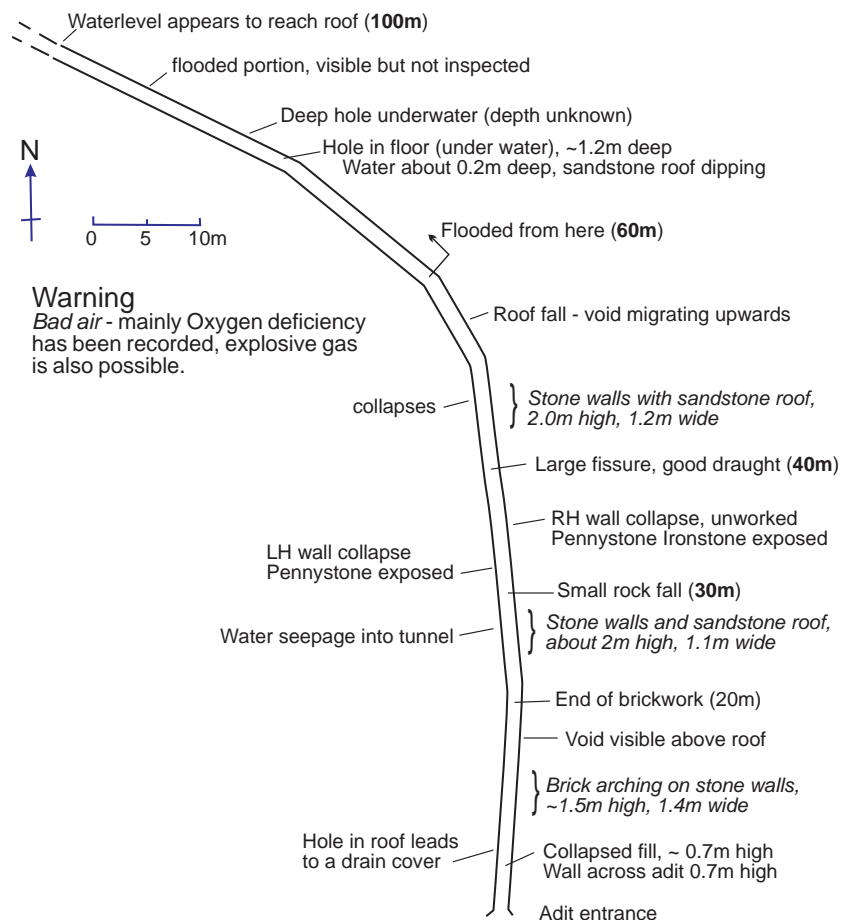
1. The Pennystone Ironstone Adit, Ironbridge

The mine is not indicated on any known map or mine plan and is unlikely to have been active since the early 19th Century. The adit entrance is a brick-arch on St. Lukes Road, Ironbridge.

When first entered in the 1980's the adit mouth was almost blocked with rubbish and dead vegetation and the air was poor. Local residents believed

that it would be flooded and that the whole area of Hodge Bower above the mine was located over a large lake. Recent explorations indicate that this may well be true!

The tunnel itself is about 2m high and 1 to 2m wide - although there is substantial collapse and much evidence of fractured roof.



The Pennystone Ironstone Adit, Ironbridge, Shropshire
Based on surveys by Ove Arup and Partners, and I.J. Brown, 1987



The Mines & Tunnels of the Ironbridge Gorge, Part 1, continued...

First 60m

The first 60m is fairly dry but muddy underfoot with about 20m of brick arched support, then about 20m dry stone walling with natural sandstone roof and finally 20m in natural rock.

Here the lower half exposes the shale bed which is very weathered but still shows some stratification, ironstone bands and ironstone balls. Although previous working and gobbing (back filling) cannot be ruled out it is not clear that this has occurred along the exposed or the stone walled sections.

Several niches or alcoves exist but there is no evidence of side passages throughout the explored section. Two 'chimneys' occur near the entrance each about 1 metre square in area and up to 3m high, their purpose is not clear but one seems to have a drain cover on top.

The two major falls consist of large sandstone blocks, but throughout the exposed lengths collapses of shale have occurred.

Beyond 60m

From 60m the floor is covered with water deepening as the strata dips into the hill, while the tunnel stays just beneath the sandstone bed. For 30m the water is less than waist deep and the tunnel is fairly straight although it veers to the left and this continues as far as can be seen.

At about 20m into the flooded section there is a conical depression in the floor about 1m deep but it can be bypassed by making footholds in the clay on the right-hand wall (*beware* - when first entered the water is clear, but a wave travels in advance of the explorer stirring up the mud so that holes in the floor cannot be seen).

Several metres further on, with only ½m of air space, there is a straight-walled shaft underfoot possibly at least 3m deep. Attempts to cross this by swimming and by bringing inflatable canoes in have not been successful for various reasons.

The cause or purpose of these depressions is not clear but they could be 'crown-hole' collapses into lower workings. The strata down to the Crawstone Seam, about 30m beneath, could contain up to 10 other worked seams and void migration (frequently aggregates below the Big Flint Sandstone) may have occurred. At Lawley up to 11m of vertical space is known for example at this horizon.

The tunnel can be seen to continue beyond this shaft, the airspace continues to reduce and a fall of sandstone blocks further view. This may however be climbable or there could be a continuation on the left-hand side, but this cannot be seen as it is around a corner.

Features of interest seen on early visits included:

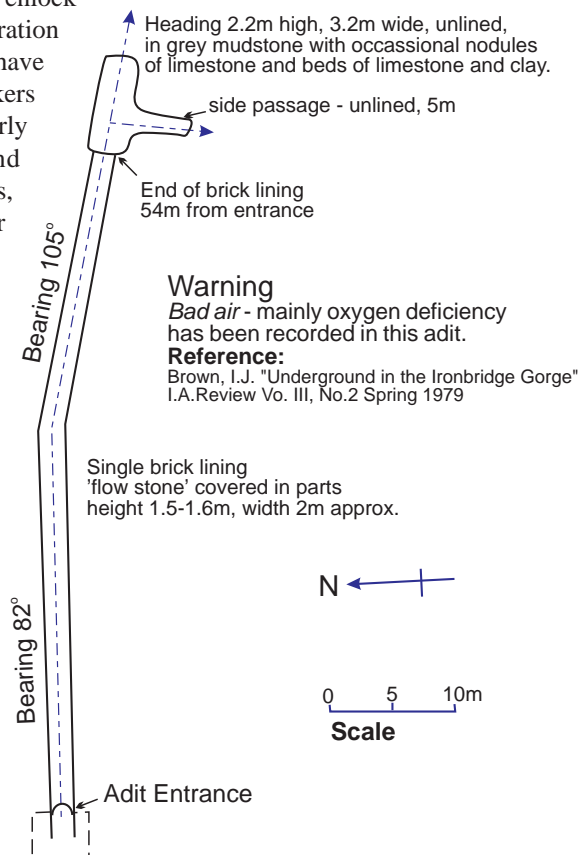
- 1) a 300m dia. fossilised tree trunk at about 30m in.
- 2) several pieces of rotten timbers possibly remnants of early roof supports.
- 3) a candle-sized niche with smoke marks 60m in.
- 4) some black tarry matter on rocks and floating on the water - which is typical of Big Flint Strata.
- 5) many coalified pieces of fossil in the sandstone.
- 6) 150m in, brown ironstone band and ironstone nodules of various sizes.

Local residents reported seeing bats in the area, and some were found in the tunnel length examined. They could well survive in the fissures and beyond the limits of exploration.

2. The Walker's Earth Mine, Coalbrookdale

This tunnel is probably late 18th/early 19th century, although no information on its history has been located. It appears to be on the Wenlock Shale/Limestone separation and it is believed to have been worked for 'Walkers Earth' (a 'clay' formerly used in washing, and soothing babies bottoms, and ladies face powder etc.). It is shown as 'Mouth of Level' on the 1849 Tithe Map, more recent maps show the entrance as 'Old Level', 'Well', and 'Washhouse' (the remains of a building were still present in the 1960's).

In the 1960's virtually the whole length was flooded to about 0.8m depth. Recently a dam at the entrance has been breached and the adit is now almost dry.



The Walker's Earth Mine, Coalbrookdale
Based on surveys by Wardell-Armstrong
and I.J.Brown, 1985



Shropshire on the Net

Those Internet freaks amongst you will perhaps have already looked at Adrian Pearce's web pages entitled *Underground Database*. He has now put on additional pages on Shropshire, Welsh and Irish mines, based on past articles in the SCMC Journals and Accounts.

To view these, point your browser at the URL :-

<http://wkweb4.cableinet.co.uk/adrian.pearce/MININDEX.HTM>

Club Pages

Don't forget the Club pages at:

<http://www.serve.com/scmc/index.html>

- these cover things like the MineCam, Borg, Underground radios, the Club winch, plus links to other interesting underground sites.

I have not had chance to make many changes recently to the site, but I am in the process of adding more pages featuring sites visited by the Club, so keep your eyes on it.

Kelvin

I.A.Sites

If you have an interest in general Industrial Archaeology, then a good starting point is the I.A. Recordings web site, this features details of their videos (naturally!), but has other material of interest plus links to most of the known I.A. sites currently in existence.

The URL, if you want to pay it a visit is:-

<http://www.iarecord.demon.co.uk>

Any others?

Do any other members have web sites featuring caves of mines that could be mentioned in 'Below', if so e-mail them to Kelvin - address on back page.

Lead Mine probe funding victory

Funding worth £60,000 has been obtained from the Government to launch new investigations into the possible dangers posed by the Gravels site near Hope village. A preliminary "desk study" was carried out three years ago and it identified "significant hazards".

These included shallow mine workings seen as a potential risk to buildings and the A488 road. There was evidence too, that surface and ground water resources were being contaminated by mine spoil.

Initially English Partnerships refused to fund any further work in the area but now it has reconsidered its position.

Shropshire Star, 4/9/97

Bronze Age link in mine hammers

The Mid Wales town of Machynlleth could be set to join the Bronze Age history trail. Local geologist John Mason discovered the town's links with the past when he found the remnants of three Bronze Age hammers at the Ogof Wyddion copper mines.

Previously the mines, which lie alongside the town's golf course, were thought to have been dug by Romans.

John, and a team of archaeologists from the Early Mines Group, carried out further excavation at the site. The site is owned by Machynlleth Golf Club.

The archaeology team found more than 70 hammers and enough charcoal to conduct a carbon-dating analysis. They say that should reveal the exact age of the site within a couple of months.

Once the results are known, Mr. Mason plans to exhibit the hammers and other finds in Machynlleth.

*Shropshire Star (Mid Wales)
4/9/97*

£265,000 cost

The cost of making safe old mine workings near Shrewsbury - home to a rare species of bat - will be at least £265,000, reveals a report to councillors.

It is not clear who will have to foot the bill for dealing with Huglith and Westcott mines, which are a short distance away from the village of Pulverbatch.

The owners of the mineral rights - if they can be identified - are expected to pay but Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council also has a duty to carry out work under the Environment Protection Act.

However a more detailed survey, likely to cost in the region of £50,000, will need to be carried out by experts to assess the risk and the remedial works necessary.

A desk study of available records and "walk-over" of the sites showed that the majority of buildings were in a stable condition though with further weathering would collapse in time.

The potential for some "massive ground movement" was identified in the main vein of the Huglith mine where most of the workings are located in dense woodland.

Workings at the Westcott site are said to be generally more stable but fencing is lacking in several places.

The rare Lesser Horseshoe Bat is known to roost in workings at both sites.

Contamination and pollution risks at the mines are not considered to be "significant" though some water sampling is recommended.

Reclamation schemes have been carried out at Snailbeach and The Bog and feasibility studies completed for further work at mines at Tankerville, Pennerley and Gravels.

Shropshire Star 8/9/97



Books in Brief

The Wenlock Limestone Industry by Glyn Williams, A4 size, 136pp, £11.50. Published 1997 by the Author: 10 Walton Avenue, Much Wenlock, Shropshire TF13 6HA, Tel: Much Wenlock 727 855.

Exploring Shropshire - Ten Walks that changed the world, by K & K Pybus, Shropshire Books, 1996, £5.75 - describes walks in most of the Shropshire Mining and quarrying areas, but watch for errors (eg: p59, where are the marble quarries on Titterstone Clee?)

Brief Account of the Village of Snailbeach and St. Lukes Church (C.of E.) by P.Francis and W.Rowell, published by the Authors 1997, 50p

Snailbeach Mine - foldout leaflet, 4 sides A4, free, published by Shropshire County Council - watch for the odd error in spelling and drawings.

New Club Account

Metal Mines of Shropshire SCMC Account No. 22 edited by A.J.Pearce (No mention at all of the highest volume metal producers of Shropshire - the ironstone mines ?)

Note: Account No.10 was produced by Brown and Davies not Brown and Heathcote as shown on page 56.



Mineral Spot

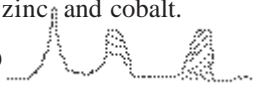
Epsomite -

hydrous magnesium sulphate.

Commonly known as epsom salts. It is one of many highly hydrated, water soluble sulphates, found in mineral waters and their deposits, salt lake areas, and as an efflorescence on cave and mine walls.

It crystallizes in orthorhombic system, occurring as crystals, granular crusts or fibrous aggregates, and as stalactites and botryoidal masses. It commonly contains large amounts of nickel, manganese, zinc, and cobalt.

$MgSO_4 \cdot 7H_2O$



Mines of the Gwydyr Forest, part 7

By J.Bennett and R.W.Vernon, published by Gwydyr Mines Publications 1997, price £6.95.

This volume, in similar style to the other 6 in the series describes the last section of the Llanrwst Mining field to be covered. It is soft-back, A5 size and contains 116 pages including 4 fold-out plans, 23 other maps and diagrams and 14 photographs.

The mines of Llanrwst, Coed Gwydr, Cae Coch and Llangelynin, Trecastell and Derwen Deg are described in this issue. They are some of the most interesting in this series and two of them; Cae Coch and Trecastell have been operational within living memory and are associated with geologists such as R.H.Hoare and G.N.Schnellman, who will be well known to many in the industry today. Both the mines received

considerable attention during the last war, Cae Coch for its sulphur and Trecastell for its lead. The latter also operated in the 1950's and even in the 1970's its waterwheel formed a well-known landmark on the Conway Valley slopes.

As with the other books in the series this one is well produced, makes for easy reading and, thanks to its numerous illustrations and maps, easy understanding.

As usual it concludes with a section on 'The Mines Today', where it is most disappointing to read that only one of the three mine sites (Cae Coch) has much remaining.

A most useful addition to the literature on Welsh Mines - thanks John and Rob for all the work done in producing this series.

I.J.Brown



Mining Videos (available from the Club)



If you are interested in doing a bit of armchair mine exploration the following videos, produced by I.A.Recordings with help from Club members, may be of interest to you.

A Tour of Clive Copper Mine £14.95

A comprehensive guided tour of Clive, with Edwin Thorpe acting the 'experienced' expert and Kelvin Lake the 'novice'. The tour covers both the upper and lower levels, plus the Northern stope (the access to which is now a bit dodgy).

Clive Rescue Practice, £9.95

An action packed 'head banging' record of a Club rescue practice, featuring the 'infamous' maypole winze traverse!

Snailbeach, £14.95

The rise and fall of Snailbeach, once renowned as the "richest per acre of ground in Europe", is traced in this production through the use of historic photographs, animated plans and sections, and unique underground video footage.

Collections from the Archives

The following tapes contain almost all the footage recorded at the given mine, and are intended as a resource base, not a finished production:

- C.15:Dudley Tunnel '88 to '89, £14.10
- C.18:Donisthorpe Colliery, £11.75
- C.20a:Snailbeach - Final Frontier, £9.87
- C.23: Bagworth Colliery, £11.75
- C.28: Morse's Level, £9.87
- C.29: SCMC in Cornwall, £16.45
- C.32: SCMC in Ireland, £14.10

For more details contact: I.A.Recordings, PO Box 476, Telford, TF8 7RH
e-mail: info@iarecordings.org
or visit them on the World Wide Web at:

<http://www.iarecordings.org/>

Club Officers
(May change after the AGM)

Diary Dates '97

President: Alan Taylor

Tackle & Rescue Officer:
Steve Holding

For organised Club trips please refer to Adrian's Monthly Meets lists.

Chairman: Neal Rushton

Training Officer:
Alan Robinson

18th October: Ecology of Old Mine Sites - a Workshop. Organised by the MHSI at the Geological Survey of Ireland, Dublin.

Vice Chair: Malcolm Newton

Conservation Officer:
Nick Southwick

18th October: Subterranea Britannica AGM and Autumn Day Conference. 10am, Lucy Cavendish College "New Building", Lady Margaret Road, Cambridge.

Secretary: Adrian Pearce

scmc.secretary@factree.org.uk

Bat Officer: Mike Worsfold

19th October: Rescue Practice, contact Steve Holding.

25-26th October: Rhosydd-Croesor connection. Contact: Ben Shaw.

1998

Treasurer: Bob Taylor

NAMHO Rep:
Colin Armfield

7th March: BCRA Cave Science Symposium, University of Keele.

25-26th April: GPF 2nd European Caving Expedition Symposium, Peak District.

Membership Services:

Mike Moore

CCC/CNCC Rep: Ben Shaw

1998: NAMHO Fieldmeet, will be held at Nenthead, hosted by North Pennine Heritage Trust and Friends of Killhope.

'Below' Editor: Kelvin Lake

e-mail: scmc@factree.org.uk

1999: NAMHO Conference, will be held in the Forest of Dean

